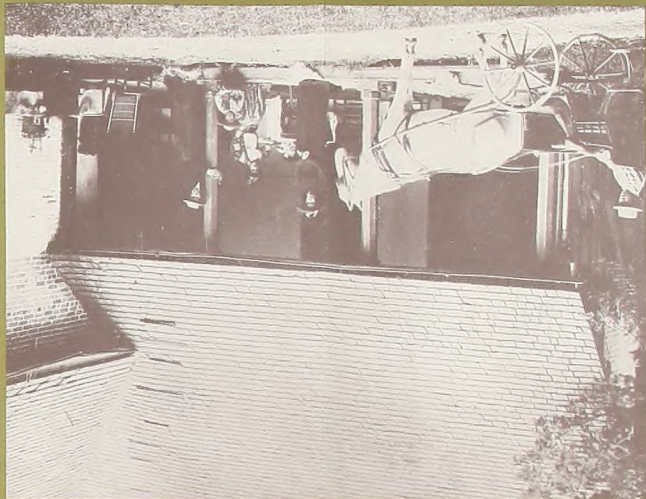


Parc historique national de Woodside



The Kings at Woodside. From left, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Billy the horse, Bella, Mrs. King, Max and Jennie.

John King in 1892.
John King en 1892.



whatnots and fretwork brackets ranged with souvenirs and more bric-a-brac. Overstuffed and tufted chairs and ottomans made a Victorian parlour an upholsterer's paradise. Dry goods merchants must also have thrived on the contemporary penchant for covering windows and furnishings with layers of fabric, which, more often than not, was garnished with tassels, flounces, ruffles and fringes. Mirrors and framed pictures did not escape festooning fabrics, dollies, antinaccassars and pillow shams were all part of the general scheme.

Beyond the reception rooms, the standard of furnishing and the quantities of ornamental bric-a-brac perhaps declined, though in virtually every room there was still as abundance of pattern — four or five different ones decorating the wallpapers, the carpets and throw rugs, the chairs, sofas, cushions and curtains.

Among the King family's unique possessions were relics from their famous ancestor. The large marble-topped table in the parlour (or drawing room) is said to have been carved by William Lyon Mackenzie. A Vice-regal Proclamation advertising a reward of 1,000 pounds for his capture, dead or alive, was also treasured by the family and was retained by Mackenzie King throughout his life.

Politics and religion

During his public career, Mackenzie King avowed that he had been strongly influenced by the example of his rebel grandfather, and that, as a boy, he had dreamed of representing North York, Mackenzie's constituency. He added that he was certainly inspired by the interest his parents took in public affairs, and probably told his first biographer that the family met regularly in the library to exchange views on public issues and to read and discuss books, magazines and daily press articles.

John King's interest in politics was more than academic. He was President of the North Waterloo Liberal Association, had much experience electioneering, and wrote many articles for Liberal newspapers and journals.

John King and his family were also deeply involved with the Presbyterian Church in Berlin. Besides taking part in church groups and social events and attending



Isabel Grace King in 1883.
Isabel Grace King en 1885.

resident, Isabel Grace Mackenzie. She was the youngest child of William Lyon Mackenzie, the crusading journalist, politician, and leader of the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada. During the Rebellion, John King's father, a British soldier, had been stationed with the Royal Artillery at Kingston, Ontario, and had fired on a small invading force from the United States, which was not led, in person or in spirit, by the fiery rebel. Mackenzie King was nevertheless much impressed by the drama of his antagonistic grandfathers, and during his political career made much of the union of their descendants, which took place in 1872.

The Kings at Woodside

By the time John King leased Woodside from the Colquhouns, he had four children and had built up a fairly substantial law practice. He was the attorney for the county and various municipal authorities, acted as Crown Counsel, was a solicitor for the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and had a branch office in Galt. (He left Berlin in 1893 to take up a lectureship at Osgoode Hall.) Woodside's previous tenant had been John King's uncle, Dougall Macdougall, County Registrar and formerly editor and publisher of the *Berlin Telegraph*, who no doubt was responsible for attracting his nephew to the Colquhoun estate.

Woodside's decor

The Kings leased an unfurnished 10-room house, and equipped it with some of the pieces that are currently in this restoration. The rest of its furnishings are representative of an upper-middle class home in Ontario in the early 1890s. They reflect the prevailing late-Victorian taste for reception rooms which sometimes seem to modern eyes to be crammed with excessively ornamented furniture and bric-a-brac, but which to Victorians created an impression of comfort, opulence, and generous hospitality. Almost inevitably, large sub-tropical potted plants competed for space and attention with plaster busts, wax flowers, beadwork, hanging plates, gilt-framed pictures suspended from picture rails and propped up on easels, petit-point mottoes, and tiered

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A memorable residence

"Woodside" was the boyhood home of William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada from 1921 to 1930 and between 1935 and 1948. He lived here from 1886 to 1891 with his parents, John and Isabel King, an older sister, Isabel (Bella), a younger sister, Janet (Jennie), and his young brother Dougall Macdougall (Max). In 1891 the Kings' eldest son left to attend the University of Toronto, but he spent most of his holidays at Woodside until the summer of 1893, when the whole family moved to Toronto.

Mackenzie King resided here only between the ages of eleven and sixteen, yet he remarked over fifty-five years later, "The years that left the most abiding of all impressions and most in the way of family association were those lived at Woodside." The King children have left ample evidence in their correspondence of their affection for Woodside and its 11-1/2 acres of grounds at the time they lived there, though the family never owned the property.

A new house near Berlin

The house had been built in 1853 for its designer, James Colquhoun, a British barrister and father of four who had recently moved to Waterloo County. He called the place "Woodside" after a family home in Britain. At that time, the early Victorian country residence was a mile or so beyond the limits of the village of Berlin (now Kitchener).

Berlin was then an up-and-coming settlement of less than 1,000. In 1853 it also gained its first bank, telegraph office and English newspaper, and had recently been chosen county town of Waterloo though it was not yet incorporated as a village. In 1857 Berlin became an important stop on the Grand Trunk railway; it also acquired 14-year-old John King and his widowed mother as residents.

Parents from opposing camps

In 1869 John King, a graduate of Osgoode Hall, moved back to Berlin and began his law practice. While at law school in Toronto, he had become engaged to in Toronto



Bella, William and their parents, John and Isabel King.

The Kings at Woodside. From left, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Billy the horse, Bella, Mrs. King, Max and Jennie.



Les King à Woodside. À partir de la gauche, William Lyon Mackenzie King, le cheval Billy, Bella, Mme King, Max et Jennie.



Isabel (Bella) King.

Isabel (Bella) King.



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